Allison Grayhurst

The Light Given

The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst

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Edge Unlimited Publishing

The Light Given
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Cover Art (sculpture):
"Rest" © 1998 by Allison Grayhurst
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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Grayhurst, Allison, 1966-
The Light Given

"Edge Unlimited Publishing"
Poems.
ISBN-13: 9798378690404
ISBN-10:

The Light Given
The poetry of Allison Grayhurst
Title ID:

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Getting Out

Blackout

If you knew
the fierce immersion,
tarnishing your already
dilapidated innards
would you have sunk so close to death,
your heart racing, aching with excruciating
escalation, skipping beats?
Would you have preoccupied your mind
with other people's good fortune, grow
bitter at your own failure to thrive,
and desired a dream that was never part
of your original vision?

You have one path and you must follow.
One that allows for no detours
or trips to sunny islands.
Faith is needed after the fall, before you land -
in the in-between time
when destruction feels inevitable, trust
there are arms to catch you, angels to guide you
gently to the ground, stand you upright
without permanent damage.
This faith is not a leap but happens
after you are pushed off the edge,
happens in the anticipation of disaster.

If you knew that was what was asked for
would you have let it retch up and slice
your essential organ like a pie?
Will you now, that you are recovering,
trust, as you are still falling, still facing
what seems like only-doom?

Will you relax into God's gracious love,
awaken a new level of faith that beats afresh
in spite of the rigid rocky terrain
fast approaching below?

I Stand Up

I stand up, everything
falls down, the load and the balance
on a soft bed of nothingness to catch
and embrace in a cruel dream
of freedom.
I draw my breath in the rising wave,
knowing the calm waters are too lonely
for sustenance.
This has butchered my means of survival,
drowning my body in acid-mud.
This has rounded out the edges, so
like a hard ball, I am tumbling down
an incline that stretches out
to a cliff with fast momentum,
no chance of halting or even slowing down.
I found a piece of joy in day-to-day service
and must pay with blood flow, extreme heat and drought,
pay and never have a day without survival's worrisome
stranglehold gnawing out my intestines, making holes
here, serious as death, serious
as an asteroid breaking the atmosphere,
thinning my faith and all I hold sacred,
tying it down on a large rock, tying me up
to a large rock, in slow decomposition,
waiting the buzzard's peck and sting.

Veiled

The splendid vision
was announced then
denounced and the whole
inspiring fire fizzled invisible.

For decades, possessed,
but still able to protect the ones I love.
Yesterday and months before, the possession
lost its rule, the blood rage coiled inside of me cooled
but this open space created has taken away
my fight with it, and every ounce of security.

Concentrating on this stand-by whiff of hope,
hope as the thing practiced and opposite to struggling,
though not enough to fill my lungs with faith, not enough
to inhale a good breath or breathe at ease
before sleep.

I don't even know my name
anymore - my demons were never slain,
they just dissipated, taken by a ghostly victory
that I cannot claim as my own courage-doing
or as a song.

It is good that they are gone
but what they gave (food for survival)
is gone with them and I cannot see a way
forward, cannot see any secret that will feed this house
and stabilize it so I can live, clean the floor
and not wonder how long I can step here, step here
and hold the ones I love in safety.

The race is done though I never reached
the finish line. I was just plucked from the track
onto a sideroad without a knapsack or a spoon.
I can blow right through my fingers.
I can curl my toes but I cannot take a step,
not like this, deserted, helpless
at this bardo crossing.

Useless

This shelter is threadbare
like a low-battery flashlight,
barely making a dark corner visible.
I sang to find an easeful slumber.
I left my empty bin by the road,
begging for a refill.

Summer is behind me.
The grass is torn
from tiny claws and pecking.
I live below the breathing line
and there is no way to rise higher
or join a harmony to unfasten my chains.

Attempting flashing solutions in a frantic rush
trying for escape, but the land I stand on
is too hard to burrow under
and there are no trees to climb.

I wait for the door to open, knowing the door
is just a dream. That sickly feeling overflows
as each effort I make for freedom
deflates, fruitless, impotent.

Interchange - warm running

Open the stark and twisted plot,
then replenish it with a prize perfume,
everlasting, infiltrating with its veiled odour
as a mild but sublime soothing caress.

Dry up the stream that ran toxic
through the yard, dig the trench deeper
and build a river with a waterfall
pouring down, energized by power manifold.

Pull out the splinter that slipped close to bone,
for decades festering, bulging in a painful swell,
leave the wound to air and forget its throb.

Swim through the spectrum colours
that trapped you in their grip,
burst out of their array and be dazzled
on a hill, at a height triumphant, astounding.

The Spell was a Shield

The spell was a child
that fell from a high tree,
now broken, always
asleep. Blindfolded climbing
up a steep hill until I crossed
the pinnacle-edge and found myself laid
flat - a million fractures
puzzle-piecing my solidarity.

At the end of the labyrinth
into death's mocking jaws, swallowed
into the heartless chamber, crushed in very direction,
no soft resting spot, no treaties for equality or deliverance.

The spell has evaporated, and with it, false notions
of guarantees, help from others, every earthly
security I tied my lifeline to.
Thresholds were crossed
only to learn they were never there, just to
learn the Aquarius-light I was drinking from was
no light but a bitter detachment from reality, a lack
of understanding.

The spell is charred, taken away.
I am open now, and new and
ever so fragile without a path or protection.
Everything is air, and what isn't air is thin glass,
meaningless see-through enclosures, a false
blocking off of some things from other things,
a false truth destroyed with no truth left yet
to replace it.

Slap

Limpid dreams
removed with grand intervention,
their ricochet aspirations
receded past sight
and anticipated applause.
Avoiding their influence like
I avoid a bruised apple, rancid
undergrowth and go-to comforts.
It doesn't work
to alleviate the raw intensity pangs
or to revamp those dreams into something
viable, buckled-up and worthy.
I release my indulges of hope,
release a future deserving of a satisfied death
with seldom the anguish of regrets and senselessness.
I let this excellent illusion end, concede,
just breathe for the sake of it, just
wake up and do what I do, corrected,
my poverty exposed.

Crack the
Exterior, Interior
Resonance

Neither the net
or the withdrawal
will get you into its vice,
but the trick of broken dreams,
walking backwards, assuming
nothing new is possible
that will be your defeat, the pit
in the black olive that stuck in your throat,
swelled up your windpipe and laid you down.

Throw away the decadence of fear,
no matter how reasonable,
fuel yourself only on ethereal faith
even though you feel condemned,
can see no exit door or revival.

Choose God over understanding,
peace over rationality.
Smell the oil, expose the miracle rising to meet you,
pushing you on, defend its mastery and strength,
choose truth that triumphs over traditions,
penetrates every nook and cranny,
inverting, setting aright
visible appearances.

A King

Bold blood brilliance,
the tactics, the unencroachable confidence
of his glacial brutality, clemency,
making victory out of nowhere.
Odds always against him, titling one way
to be seen and the opposite way to be heard.
Swelling with passion, with genius strategies
unthought of, fertilizing the crescendo of
music chanting his praise and undeniable
sovereignty.

Introduce me, let me smell
his intake-outtake of electricity,
the absolute procurement of all his needs
through risk and never doubting his good fortune.
Let me see into his eyes
devouring like a blackhole stillness, a force
immune to resistance.
Let me witness his charm,
the slavish devotion he demands and receives
naturally.

At once crowned,
(still frenziedly restless at the centre)
then blindsided by an unexpected,
equally violent, legendary and grand
downfall.

Marsh

I walk into a forbidden marsh,
to rest from the penalty of my dreams.
I place my head on a pile of wet debris
and wait to see who or what approaches.

If everything was in line with a harmonic tune,
with the uniting truth, then my hopes
would not cling like leaches to my thighs,
reducing me with malnourishment.
I could piece together a path to travel
out of this marsh, out of the gloom
and rotting mulch.

As it is, I am overdrawn,
my bucket is cracked
and my clothes outgrown.
The wind has always scooped me into
its scarcity and a solitary translation
without recognition.
No one sees me or needs me anymore.

The marsh is my devoured saving.
The stench of what is left fills my nostrils,
reminds me of my stagnation,
is the rising gaseous force
of my obvious doom.

Maple Syrup

Today the cup is cracked,
freedom arrives lacking support
but giving time for me to strengthen enough
to make the flight and wipe the table
spotless.
Today the gift arrives
in the guise of a curse, compassion
manifesting as trauma and
either I will go mad or lighten my load
and affirm the movement finally possible,
outshine my fears, avoiding the scurrying ants
in the pantry, close the door and find alternate
sources of food, incapable of infestation,
pure as well-water, pure as God's love always is
when I accept it, when I accept all I own is a choice
of faith or cynicism, when I welcome
the hand of the one who sent me,
hold that hand, following and wanting
for nothing more.

Gift

Rebellion innate in the seed,
at the start, acknowledging
the culpability of the
the acceptable unjust, of landing
where others crawl, and still others, soar.

I cracked, eager for righteousness
but ungrateful.
You stood beside me, never wavering
or surrendering to anxiety. Your devotion
surpassed any generosity I've ever known.
Where others have abandoned or made
light of the news, offering
no humanity or understanding -
you alone held my hand,
shadowed me through hospital halls,
nourishing me through my despair
and the savage aftermath of failure.

There is nothing to be gained from
that gruesome experience, but your triumphant love,
that you were there and remain here
as my refuge, an anointment of great mercy,
a lasting antidote.

Rabbit

Broken longing
healed in the eyes
of a tender receiver, blessed
by mercy and the promise of perpetual drink.
Soft, silky warmth beside me
fragile and more precious than
any perfectly-cut gemstone.

Faith once mangled now restored
to a richer glory than introduced before.
Solitude in communion - God inside
a gentle touch, mutual bond and loneliness appeased.

Sweet waters of fate receive me,
my neck is stretched high,
my arms are a basket.

Let the unassuming reign,
place me secure in this place
where the private and the meagre
are honoured, quietly
declared yours.

If

If we live
through this hangman's touch,
outrun this heatwave and find
an oasis in spite of the odds,
then we will be sealed
in the summer of our belonging.

We will take only what we are given
to own, dress up occasionally, mostly
be charmed by sweet and simple delights.

If we survive
the devouring vultures, the
vanity of self-punishment and
the unbreakable natural law,
then our breadbasket will be
overflowing with leftovers,
our hearts will be still in the peace
of eternal love, loving this day and the next
as lovers do, happy to serve,
happy to fill the bathtub
and soak.

You Heard Me

You heard me speaking
and you shook the floor,
loosening the dust and devastating
sadness until that floor
was dismantled and replaced
by a stronger, easier-to-clean
platform, until the miracle
rose unpolluted in a continual
swelling, sinking the darkness for good,
calling brother to sister to the truth
of your perfect temple, worshiping the work
of love, relieving the weight of chaos.

You heard me and I know you are perfect,
more real than the burrowing fears inside my head,
more powerful than the churning sickness of
anxiety that overtakes my gut, overtakes and takes
me away from you.

You who heard me,
through paralysis and poison,
through my weak overtures, ripped away
my unhealthy accumulations, cleansing
my desires that missed the mark,
until I saw and committed
to one voice, one priority, listening.

Zen Virgin

This killer yoke
was pieced together from another century,
enforcing brutal labour,
swollen joints from overload
and depression swamping the upper ground.

You know it has always driven the hunt,
from your parents' childhood homes
in Indian monsoons and Polish Februarys -
dishwashing, factory working, 4 a.m. typing,
deciding to plot an unexpected ending,
yet still, following form.

You know you can get out only
if you stop defending all of its creation, only
if you drain your devotion and broaden what
you are and are not permitted to be.

You can get out, flashing, golden-sea eyes
flashing and leaping in celebration of the door touched
and opened, the re-wiring that burns every wire
and sets down the players
and the playing board.

Do this emptying.
Trust it is done and it will be done.

You can hold your shoes in one hand
and your truth in another,
put on those shoes and yield to a direction
unprecedented.

Mark it down

Great joys approach
like weeping harmonies in music,
relief in the course-correction,
astonishment in the manifold beauty.
Decorations placed around the table.
Declarations for devotion riveting
through the backyard garden where
everything overflows with abundance,
is a tapestry of young blood frolicking.
Shared surges of strong faith between us,
because our love is never ending
because the loudest boom has exploded
altering the vibration here and forever,
a higher octave, a mountain sailed over,
a vision walked into, gallant and kind -
welcoming, offering
to fully bathe our bodies, open a fortune box
so we can step away from restrictions, step into
a beautiful anticipation.

Pasture

I can see my mind in victory
over the clinging contaminating thoughts
that used to spiral in a vigorous loop
through my days even when in joy,
even when hearing a tambourine tune
rise up, happy and fresh.
Now those thoughts struggle to stand,
abandoned in a desert vast
and widowed. Dehydrated unto death
they sometimes whisper, but barely have a hold
or exert a reasonable authority.

My shame has packed its belongings and left.
My self-pity has reduced its wound
to a pin-prick along with my bitterness.
Gratitude is the only dream worth feeding.
I will feed it and not be overwhelmed
or react to desperate hungry
rumblings, not react in desperation
to what is lacking on the canvas, on the alter,
or in my understanding and this growing surrender.

Learning

Because I said
it was not enough,
the emptiness came
like a hard beat plummeting
me into doom.
Because I cared to record
each pain, betrayal and fracture,
I could not walk fast and glinting,
dragged back and down.
Because I lost my worship,
I lost my joy and the heat of life
that inspires.

Because I took heed of these pitfalls
and take one section of the day at a time
to do and explore both service and favour,
I am uncovering a mosaic beneath my feet,
smelling scents I thought disappeared with my youth.
Because I keep the rituals that keep me sane,
in storm or shade, I pray more than I dream
and when I dream it is about abstractions,
about tree branches, blankets, about
the hair's breadth distance between sea and stars.

Immersed

This shift is gracious
like a runaway found and comforted.
Disguised as an axe-lop,
as a callous reduction of earned respect,
this shift is permission
for exploration, expansion into
clear waters, tickled by the fish seen
circling below.

I can greet those fish,
each one as an individual, bend my body
and enjoy the details of their scales,
the space between their fins, and their lips,
thick and sometimes scarred
by hooks or other near-disasters.

I can give up my burden, my self-attention
and observe, appreciate their maneuvering
between my calves and shins, over my toes,
curious at these fleshy stumps of mine,
appearing in their home.

I can tell them I am friendly,
a friend, not here to make a disturbance.
I can be motionless for a while, because of the shift.
Because of the shift I am opened, receiving gladly
each delicate undulating swerve,
each nibble, sway.

Outline

Too bad you got burned
on the spell of worldly accomplishments
and comparison, that you fell
into the snowbank and drenched yourself through.
Friendly false eyes in the flame,
in the sweating ruthless ocean - you lost
the hand that held you to truth and the longing
for a deeper betterment.

But now you are home, proclaiming
the invisible as your building blocks - piled high
and mortared together strong against every storm.
You almost got pulled into the everlasting pit, fooled
by fool's gold, but you reached the upper edge and
lifted yourself to a safe landing.

Eat from your bowl and be grateful.
Everything you asked for is already yours.
Walk away from the party,
shake hands, give uncommitted hugs,
then read by the dim light, knowing your true riches,
knowing all that you treasure is complete, thriving
in this compact tried-and-true family
and in the landscape of your evolving solitude.

Footsteps

of a haunted lion mourning
her lost young. In a cage,
another brow folded in grief
and grim expectation.
Entitlement massaged into the bright blank eyes
of the classless rich with their toothy smiles
and ego-feeding gestures
of generosity.

The lion is haunted, the rabbit
is caged and the mournful dog longs for kinship.
The sacred is devoured but not for long
and not forever
as joy overtakes with one relaxed touch,
one moment of complete enjoyable surrender
where nothing impure
can enter.

That moment is worth poverty, worth
the fevered greed swirling around,
spoiling the atmosphere,
tricking with false kindness and ignorance of self
that leads to chaotic manipulation.
It is worth the penalty of no security

just to combine for a few moments
with another's spirit, be grand
in such holiness, be humbled
by such rudimentary love.

Jesus in the Marrow

You arrived again, reviving
the groove, clearing
out the debris of lingering
madness and anxiety, brilliant
blazing again with your miracles,
your compassion that leaves me breathless
with joy, surges within with affection, protecting,

feeling like a did when I was a child
and my father walked with me on his shoulders
and I could see higher, further than ever before,
safe and moving, knowing
I would never be harmed, never abandoned,
knowing the freedom of a child's fearlessness,
trust in the strength of the one who loves me,
trust in the power of the one who carries me like
a queen, like someone special,
unshackling my imagination, restoring my vigour
and swoon.

You arrived again and I remember
all of it, all of your love,
dazzling, perfect, saturating
my seat at the table, overflowing.

Intertwined

Together like odours
that merge in a closed room,
blending indistinguishable,
we are continual - each the same
as the other - in plague breath, in worries,
and in peace-filled joys, hopes that restore
strength and future paths beautifully unfolding.

So we decorate inside, never letting on
how much care we give to each detail.
Truth is kind to us as we hold hands across
the sofa, smiling at each other because
there is no corruption between us, no hidden
regrets or festering resentments when we see each other
we see a gift of eternal faithfulness, a lifetime pact,
sure-footed, winged and light and rich as honey
on the tongue, as a friendship that has never betrayed
or grown stale, and a love in a constant cycle of aching,
being satiated, counting on satiation and thresholds
reached and surpassed, sensuously mastered
together, often weary, but never of each other.

Only you are my love, bound
like the stem to its flower,
and the hawk to its sharp eye.

We will give nothing to the rest
that does not join our great love,
tries to defile our green fields flowing
or make us believe in less than this miracle.
For all things of life are ours -
our veins, our holy light-strings,
intensely locked, tenderly alive.

This end

This end is an offspring
to tend to and adore,
breaking through distinctive patterns
that worked for a while, but now,
only harm.

This offspring is musical,
composing practices and prayers,
hungering for the details
to disinfect and clean.

This joy is unspoken,
activity with no burdensome description,
uninfected with expectations, obligations
or the guarding dog.

This house has been lived in,
all things that have died have died
again, deeper, and finally here, renewed.

Faith is the exact destination, lapping the plate
sparkling so all that is left is awe and mercy, digesting
simplicity in the swelling brightness before me.

I have you again like at the start
when I first witnessed your face
and hair and eyes and loved you
with a bliss that in the past
I could only steal from books but now
I owned, uniquely as my own.

Trees hang over the cliff.
Behind me is the summit.
My foolish hopes align
with divinity's commands.
Bars are dropped, lightweight like pins.
Moon and sun full, clearly visible
in the same morning sky.

Homecoming II

Returning to the kelp forest
as a companion to a larger inhabitant,
as a guest to the great reef waters,
a lover of the odd and miraculous,
seduced by succulent influences,
descending then rising all in good speed.
I welcome the sand dwellers
and the tunnel diggers. I am welcomed
by the tentacled and the fanged,
and by the soft, squishy translucent floaters.
I am just another creature that eats or will be eaten,
and I relish in this environment of unquestioning acceptance
my minuscule place.
I ride the back of the bottom feeder. I find my own
way through the caves, avoiding the high price
of this liberty.
I have returned and I am not leaving
for a more agreeable, less authentic reality.
My form is older, broken, degenerating, but
I feel it again, my nerves,
secret sensations, glorious intensity,
awakening like during the first fall,
like the first time waiting
to being caught, irrevocably
saved.

Jesus Holds

Nudging, pushing,
foot-tripping to
kindle a dream that
runs publicized on every
channel, uttering its happy fortune,
lined up with divine commands.

The abyss is an arrow shot right through,
splitting what doesn't belong away from
the thriving harvest. If you try to
cross it, you will fall into it,
for the health of the harvest cannot be soiled
with past inclusions.

Promises made are finding
fruition, and greed and bitterness
have diffused into a calm surrender
to the unknown.

This friendship lasts forever,
it does not let go
in the wake of an attaching darkness.
It banishes anger, exposes
scars covering the face
and under layered clothes.

This friendship demands no other
connection as strong as its own,
peels away the scaly scabs inside the ears,
adds up all dividends, then pays out without
scratching or lashing
the spinning inner sacred core.

Not a Mirage

Ambushed, held hostage, then forgotten,
discarded, starved and too weak
to move. I find myself in a dead forest
that was burned by a fire a few years ago -
just sprouts of trees and a few ants trailing
the chewed-up ground.
I will find a cabin to rest in and get warm,
then find food in that cabin and rejuvenate.
I will not think of them (those who took me)
more than I have to. I will not
devote my energy
to bitterness but fasten myself
to thoughts of a future where freedom
is mine and I am not obliged to sleep
my nights in a mite-infested bed or
pull at my hair-strands
in boredom.
My burden is unloaded,
my shackles are far away
after so many decades.
It will take commitment to shine
in order to shine, but I will shine.
Near a country river
I will make my home, remain
tied to a promise like a covenant devoid
of self-pity, return to joy
as though never captured, never broken.

Stepping In

Against Gravity

He sings because he is song,
essence-song -
potent life, potent death forever.
He dreams salubrious dreams,
fatter at the core and needle-hard all around.
He lost the need for enchantment
and exhibition. The inveterate intensity
within him is mastered, absorbed into his every cell.
It is not that he is better, only more genuine
in his connection, metaphors advancing,
infiltrating his pulse.

He knows because he is wild, dangerously free.
Break him with poverty and he will break every rule.
He will burst into flight, dancing against gravity,
against a blood-moon.
Tin-foil wrap him into a put-upon routine
and he will make music from the crackling -
laid out flat, pressed down,
he will transform his form, rising
whole in an inspired reverie.

Poetry is Breath

Poetry is breath,
not a sailboat sunk
decades ago mid-ocean,
far from any desire for discovery
let alone retrieval.
Poetry is everything,
not the thing never talked about,
avoided into non-existence
because it is uncomfortable
and far too strange.
Poetry is like God,
only not God, but tied to God
like a puppet to the puppeteer's strings
dependant on God for any and all
animation.
Poetry is coming,
burning down the aisle
to its lasting consummation.
Deny it and it will by-pass you,
and its gift, its magnificence
(like a first love that feels
that first love unending)
you will never experience.
Poetry is not song.
In some ways (thunder-lightning beat)
more primal.
In some ways (blood-curdling word connections)
less.
Poetry is not like birth
is more like death -
only mentioned when necessary,
but always inevitably
necessary.

Poetry is breath.
If you love it, you will know it
like a lover, satisfying, surprising,
strenuously demanding.
If you pretend it is not for you,
then it is not,
and you will go through your days
without it, missing that meal,
that next-layer rare connection
that has no substitute or important equal.

Maelstrom

In preference
instilling
the conditions
of terror
Fly like a hen
across the field and back
to the barn
Could there be another dream
worthy of oiling or is there just
inactivity everywhere causing
grid-lock, prolonging depression and time spent
under the rafters watching the game?
I am somewhere identical to where I was before,
yet labouring under its own Academy - learning
the tricks, discerning the only essential tea
adequate to brew.
There is the other side to this
and I will get there
without therapy or disintegration.
I will get there, intact, not a garment
soiled or torn.

Inertia Foiled

I could speak ugly
like a suicide weapon
inflating misery into
a ballooned and final action,
irrevocable.
I could cry like I was begging -
one leg broken, both legs
unusable, cry in my rejection,
plead pity like a half-crushed
ant.
I could hide in my comfortable spot,
refusing to move or to attempt a peering-out,
beyond
my visible understanding.
I could stop and stop forever
but I can't because
love is stirring, waking
ready to come down the stairs
and share a language, a trust
that overpowers my sluggish mind-flow,
tells me
I could just receive
and dedicate my purpose
alone
to this sensation.

In the Bloodline

In the bloodline
like walls of lead
storing blockages like
clots and unlivable dilemmas,
the past is a monster
telling you what and what you don't
deserve, beating on your brain
like on a dusty rug that will never
rid itself of mites no matter how hard
it is hit, will never release
its stains, can only be thrown out, over
the rail, into the dumpster.

In the vital present, uncompromised by thought
and expectations, nothing is determined,
no fortune teller to foretell what doesn't yet exist.

Gravity is a false witness,
a trickster in the fold, folding this into that
into complex patterns void of significance,
except as patterns to follow, analyze, get lost in
as a desperate hope for control.

But the galaxy is not gravity,
is affectionate, unpredictable, purer
than understanding.
Bloodlines are straight lines
that nature abhors.

Ignore common enemies,
blow out the candles, blow,
arousing the birthing pulse
of a strange and glorious logic.

What Do I Belong To?

I waited like a face
before a mirror
waiting for expression,
waiting for an answer to carry me through
until mealtime.

I washed the clothes, did all things
necessary to keep clean and fertile,
to rejuvenate and knead out the numbness
infiltrating one limb and another.

I asked like I was instructed to ask,
grazing at every opportunity, in spite
of the lack.

I moved against the shadows so they
wouldn't consume, making every effort
not to harden, to curtail
this stasis that will turn to sickness and
turn again to death.

I am waiting for a reaping
in this favourite place
I call my own, so I can build upon,
have a steady flow to satiate all thirst,
have breathing room to flesh-out dreams -
some prayed for, some unexpected.

Peel

Orange peel
peel away my
heartless woes,
condemn again
the general rule
and allow the lotus
to bloom.

Remarkable day
that snatches away
the mystique from the mystics,
horseback rides to the summit
then descends at high velocity,
never losing ground or footing.

Power in my mind, I trust what I believe,
finally not fooled by the artificial
or displays of unquestioning confidence.
Finally my hope is tied to my faith.

I squeeze the fruit and smile in amazement
as I taste its intoxicating droplets,
let them pool in my mouth,
sensually reviving, loosen the grip
then drink.

Cut the Reins
(Romulus over Numa)

Before equality
was a loophole-word
that meant each-to-their-own,
there were possibilities, retaliation,
convictions that gnawed crazed in the gut,
not tended to as complex calculations.
Blood was required for those who walked
bare-footed, in chains. Smiles were overlooked
because every movement forward could be attacked
and the attackers were ruthless,
were the upper-cast-surveyors, pursing their lips
for future indulgences and the grand cutting-down.
Before there was war then there was religion,
rituals to replace the war with locked-in-duty
and unchallengeable hierarchy.
The philosopher king was a king
of masterful manipulation.
With him, peace reigned
as long as the chairs started with
were the chairs stayed with,
each accepting their given seat no matter
its disconnection from dignity or its captivity.

Better the clarity of servitude than
to decorate the death of freedom
with a bribe, false expectation
and regulated civility.
Better the sibling-slayer, bared-tooth ruler
over the priest. Better the glutton
owning his transgressions
over the secret-eater, pretending

compassion with charity, and devotion
with upholding traditions,
basing wisdom on semantics, burying alive
the disobedient sex-alive misfits in a room
with a soft bed, a cup of water and an obedience to shame,
strong enough that they go quietly, underground,
accepted enough that the perpetrators feel justified,
fully at ease, appeased from guilt
by a sanctified brutality.

That End

That end was a sound,
a sharp breeze that cracked
the funeral casket.
What love could happen, happened
then expanded thick and buttery
like a pleasant dream stirring
in the early morning hours.
I held your hand and you glittered
with a beautiful depth fully your own.
That end was employment
into a purposeful labour, meaningfulness
hitting hard and sideways.

Your hands are an intellectual's, tender
as they have always been.
The concrete blockade is past us.
The foul scent repeating-shame has gone away,
replaced with an uplifting aroma.

We belong to each other, on the edge
of this unexperienced ecstasy, starting to bud,
flesh-out, claim our place on the stem -
fed from the anchored richness below and from
the pure colouring-sun, witnessing.

Zen Walk

Release the washing
and just set sail.

Born from hurt and from frustration,
the dirt upon you will never come clean.
The battle within the game
will play out the same - body parts
will deplete then start to pile.

Make an impression outside the circle,
foiling the laws that hold you in place,
declaring your place on the mound.

None of it is real
if you don't want it to be.
Even death will not free you from
the heavy grip, not from the debt accumulating.
Only an angel's vision, the one Jesus revealed,
only setting sail, releasing your assignment
will release you.

Simply love and let go
of expectation. Master
waiting, listening, waiting.

The animals know this -
taking, giving,
freely
void of gratitude
immune to resentment.

Bread & Fruit

Under the deed
the golden intention is hidden
willing to conquer
made-up realities,
fantasies drooling into the brain.
I asked for hope and was given
great love. Although exhausted
I can still reply authentic,
even with enthusiasm.
Honour is pronounced as natural integrity.
Feasting on the yolk, a time when
childishness is reduced to non-consideration,
and even gone are aggressive jealousies and
the rules of the perpetually damned.

Now you are in the sun
like in a dream you have dreamt of for so long.
Strong and capable, the power of liberty
blazing through your pours, into
the rivers and into the seas
everlasting.

Bound to

Tear apart tomorrows' boundaries
and be identical to water,
taking your cue for movement from the wind.
The same way self-respect is chiselled at
by compromise, poverty seduces the mind into despair.
Let it heat up. purify and find a harmony
unusual in its longing and continuance.
I loved you but now I have no urgency or desire.
You are yes and also no.
I can't say why I can't hear your music or live
advancing a future beneficial to the eternal stream
and to myself personally.
I don't know why futility clings
to me like a barnacle, latching on, lingering
one day to the next, crusting my skin
unrecognizable.
I have no solution to eradicate this quagmire
or wash myself of this fiction and allow your reality
to take hold.
The same way life has lost all its questions,
colours get frayed, braided as one into
a dull flat grey.
I see only flaws and the inevitable fate
of those flaws.
I cannot lift myself or script
a worthy chapter.

Tear this apart and take me under,
to witness life bulbous, translucent and
so far removed from my bony heavy mass.

I cannot labour here another day,
brooding in defeat.
I cannot love you and I need help
to love you again, feel my dismemberment
dwarfed, unequalled
by your mercy.

What is

What is the end
but a decision made
on a balcony, in a storm,
in solitude - evoking the
eternal and finite as one, in one
swift movement?

What is peace
but a landscape
with satellite trees and a warm moon
caressing the grasslands and the river
beside the grasslands humming
the electric-nerve sound
of its existence?

What is the beginning
but emptiness
after a flood or a fire, giving back
to God what has always been God's
and then standing, maybe stepping,
free and unprotected from gravity
and from time?

What is it now
to watch my mother changing,
deteriorating, needing more and more,
hurting more and more?
To be privileged to love her, to be
her sun and star and the daughter
her great soul deserves as it readies
to depart, as it takes this journey -

pitching clear one minute and confused
the next, underlining the creases in books,
reading out loud the words of our Jesus -

grace so grand and divine, it is terrifying
for both of us, knowing what is ahead,
trusting that great love to carry her
mercifully, and even tenderly,
through that final door.

The Death Journey

My Mother's Sky

(Eileen (Lee Porter) Grayhurst 1930-2024)

The Death Journey

Space around the memories,
walking the cul-de-sac,
house to house, in a dream
where the small school stood and the field
is just the same where you linked arms
with your teacher and talked,
bright with your awakening into literature.

The trees are stronger, thicker-trunked,
living non-violent as they expand
and take up more ground.

Space from room to room and five hawks
fill the sky, then merge with the sky over the lake
and the vast line of clouds, changing temperature.

She drives her last car drive,
into this emptiness that does not hurt
but offers no comfort.
After the drive
the love in her blazes refreshed
as she sits in her lazy boy chair,
forgetting her sickness and old age,
blazes the whole scope of her magnificence,
strongest in her compassion.

This last journey we will have together.
We will overcome together until the end
and even then
there will be no ending, just a change,

space, I cannot fathom,
space added between us, space experienced
sometimes as a shedding of plumage,
sometimes, as a wasps' nest touched,
accidental unbearable sting.

Before I remember
blank days, atheist days
that left me sombre-hard,
but these days
are brim with harrowing storms,
prayers and keepsakes infused
with intractable meaning, memories
ripe and revered as a newborn's flesh.

Before, my soul was below, breaking
through the body regularly, in pieces,
but these days it sits on the surface,
intact, a glass sphere without protection,
thrown and rolling, like
a lightning fuse, cracked.

These days there are no pointed steps,
but each day is like the first sun rays seen,
heightening my energy to be as kind and capable
as possible as the bringing pulse lives in a jar,
is taken out of the jar, and dying takes its fill,
and death runs in circles around the dream
and everything within the dream
that is real and everlasting is quenched
when the days are these days
sober and groaning, rising
break-and-fall, cresting hard
with this shining golden sharp
hurt, breath-taking.

Tricky blood dripping
into upper wall cracks,
through the grout tracks
and into winter's foreboding
months ahead.

How does it take so little to examine
the underside and know it is rotten,
flesh covered but disintegrating
underneath?

How many hands have to wash
at the same sink until the basin gets cracked
and the taps only release a trickle?

Tomorrow is today is
a slow-moving line bruised
with intensity and trauma,
clothed in brackets that shift then fall
then plateau before they fall again.

What seems unending
will end and when it ends
an ocean of emptiness will
consume. The dragon's nest
will be disturbed and
heat will flow its lava-reach and hot depth
into the ordinary, the extraordinary
and everything in between.

This star is imploding into a vacuous
vacuum-suck and spiral break, spinal break
that breaks any chance for mobility.
When it ends it will be my end,
orphaned, no hidden curses, icons will be broken,
and saints will be laid bare, naked, exposed before God.

So end, my mother, but do not end,
be like a songbird blasting her song
before the sun even rises, glorifying,
and watch the heavenly bodies
surrounding, lifting your soul gently,
transforming you naturally
to breaststroke through
sun-bearing ridges
rising, dipping
divine dimensions.

The backside of the shadow
is awake, and losing ground again
burning in the sinkhole, into
a conclusion of harsh hard
cause-and effect.
Eyelids lower, sleep is never rest
but a patchwork horror-show
of violence and loss and things
once perfect, stolen
behind locked doors.

Underground, the circus continues
and I will never find my way out
of this mirrored maze.
I know that if I lie flat in the stark silence,
mortal eroding flesh is inevitable.
Extravagant love always has a price.
The price owed has been paid and I must leave
the turning circle, step past the fissure-groove
and sink into a faith abiding.

I will walk with you reckless
over this abandoned lake,
skipping across veiled skin ice,
thinning, seeing through, skipping,
and somehow never a crack will form
and never your toe nor my heel
falling through.

The smell of worms.
A feast that rages inside
the system-nerves, taking
the body to extreme outerspace,
thresholds of reason
and waiting in the death-year
the year of exhaustion - one day brushed
with energizing hope, and the next,
crumbled, withdrawn.

What is deception in this playing field?
What is an honest ascent that will also
echo into the roots and stay there?

The distance to carry this weighted reality
is unknown, the duty within it, and the love,
is immediate and unquestioning.
So I stay, pressed against the mountain,
pressed against this aching uncertainty.
Pressed and moving and mourning
each conversation, trusting
that the sharp pointed misery
will not pitch, that peace will expand
until peace overcomes.

Arrow stream
in between existences
splashing between shores,
forced to confront her ancient
criticism that has wrapped
my mind-frame and grown
a shadow as cumbersome
as a heavy chain.

This land she demands me to walk on
crowns me with gruelling labour,
hijacking my dignity and sense of equality.
It is a constant place of servitude merging
with guilt and a dismissal of my strength
and true worth.

This red line drawn is crossed over,
onto hot sands without sandals.
Mine is to give but not to neuter
my prayers - rage and pity colliding.
I will give but I will not have
my music reined and whipped
and tossed like a dusty bag
with the rest of the clipped toenails.

I will tell her what I cannot tell her,
by not owning her hierarchical demands
as I give, as I am placed within
this imprisoned place
as her sickness and drug-induced mania
takes control -
her petty compulsions incurable,
but my love for her
so much more.

Kaleidoscope flaming,
her eleven colours remaining
mixed and pure and still swirling,
undimmed
by suffering's panicked toll

Too much dust and debris
filling the vents, my lungs.
Twisted plots of imagined problems
flung across the river without
factual explanation.

So I endure and I count my numbers
to hold in my anger, hold back my tears
and keep doing the soft servitude and
diligent care I am accustomed to,
instead of doing what I want to do -
withdraw, fold up and out
for at least a good week.

Too much drug-induced insanity whispers,
whispering accusations that hold no water,
but cut and kill just the same
all my good will, my enduring effort
and my exhausted heart that believed at least
it has kept itself true.

The crow almost hits the moving car,
almost goes under the wheel. Instead
it somersaults and avoids being clipped
by inches, flying in front of the car window,
raised away by maneuvering a mounting wind.

Too much blood without redemption.
Too much condemnation for a false claim,
a winter blank and brutal,
not of my own making.

Remember, remember -
the crow caws and reverberates
into the white cells, red cells
or your bloodstream -

Remember
God gives nothing easy,
nothing worthy of keeping
that doesn't first eviscerate
before reseeding
your radiant core.

How can I rock
between the eaten bread
and the rotten leftovers,
filling plates with putrid smells
and locked-in rage that rages in
an insomniac relentless punch
and tilt - twisting the bowels,
concerned only with petty victories?

How can I keep my self open
while needing full-on protection
from her drug-induced distancing eyes?

How can I live through another day
of exhausting intensity, with unveiled
shameless fears filling space and
the brutal-swerve
of a lingering inevitable?

How can I hold on until the end
hold out until permission is granted
to at last collapse flat out,
unfold, fold?

Last days, these days
roll like a slow-moving stone
across a stony terrain -
many bumps, inclines, declines
and turns.

Last days, restless then at peace
then restless again
as limitations close in so only
the essentials remain.

Last days are these days
soaked with this blazing wound, continuing.
These days there are no more plans
but to live through the days letting in
the undefiled grace that rises like vapour at dusk
through the balcony-door crack,
through her smile which she still manages occasionally,
keeping pace with the clawing hunger for relief
and the undercurrent smells of sickness.

These days are the last days
I can love you,
and how I love you, my mother -
your bright sailboat stalled
in the maw of this menacing wave
surging.

It is clear
that finally we are
adopted into the universe's time frame,
that time is not counted by cards
or the constellations.
Clear that light is not light-weight
but heavy
when it transforms.

Cracked leather belts tighten like nooses,
dreams crack then shatter and scatter
their fragments down the drain.
God is in the laundry room.
God is in her laboured respiration
and in her smile she now only shows
to strangers.

It is clear dying is not death.
It is its own journey -
a body breaking, a soul struggling
and losing
no matter the effort
to keep itself here, whole.

I wish I was a snail
robbed of its shell, squished
underfoot, drying up in the
sun
so all that was left
of me was a thin crust of skin
that found its way into pavement pores,
and I could be disintegrated, be no more.

I wish I had no responsibilities
but to my solitude, my own thoughts
waking and sleeping.

I wish I never tried to love
because now I know
I have failed at love, to love,
to be strong when open, protecting
not only from the outside but inside too,
taking on others' spiritual burdens,
not out of kindness
but out of cowardice and the delusion
that the world is anything but
a lulling zone of harsh beggary
and bully imagination.

I am a broken toy kicked to the curb.
I am nothing. I have nothing and
I wish I was a snail, dried up,
sensory-dead, flat
and inconsequential.

I don’t know how to sing.
My legs have become old
and there are no more believers
around me.
Clasped in a never-opening lair
with active lava and no windows,
I cannot find the cave through the narrow incline,
trapped, submerged.

I cannot sing or breathe or be here
as I am broken down
bloodied and maimed.
I cannot continue to move,
pretend the feeling light is inside me
when it isn’t, when most days
I wish it was over and the throne of my failure
would burn with myself along with it.

Chaos, eroding sickness,
and the brutal cold reign supreme.
Everything I have done
is shattered in a pit
with no way to reassemble or resume.

I don’t want to be here.
I don’t want the natural law
but only God’s mercy.

I cannot sing.
My memories are false, used-up
and dissipating.

Exhausted like a willow tree
is exhausted after a storm
but the storm keeps thrashing
and scooping all strong things once rooted
to the ground, releasing them across
the lawn like a brick thrown to the head,
like a dream inhabited in its ghoulish
madness, running but getting nowhere.

The suffering, the need
and the love that keeps
it together but not always.
Nerves dosed in gasoline -
fire just feet away but still at bay.
Breathing for one day, taking no messages, hearing
no extreme complaints. The doors are closed.
The balcony window is open. I step out,
there is a sky and a hawk merging with the clouds.
How much more can I hold?

And then it will be over, and I will hold no more,
not her frail hand, not her scent, not her eyes
with my eyes in deep and struggling prayer,
not her body leaning into my arms,
her full weight surrendered.

A day of reprieve,
wearing a costume and getting
in a car.
A day when the light
is unhooked from its source
and no one will say why
We will just carry on as through
this distress is natural
as though it is a wave to endure
instead of a captive fall.

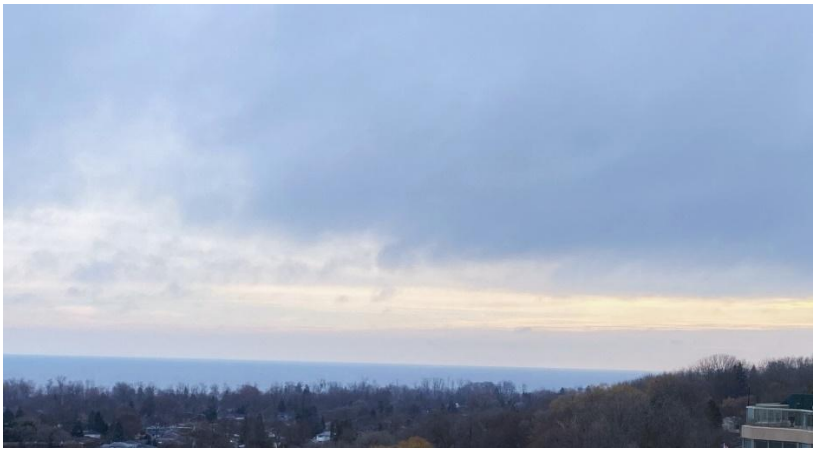
A day of reverie,
the last time of gathering
and playing the role
The first Christmas at her home
The first time she will sleep through
most of it.
A day that we thought would not come
with her still with us.
So we are grateful
and we take this day
putting our mourning aside
this day - a winter-solstice flower
bearing its last bloom
before the advancing frost.

After the end,
when the end comes
and speaking is useless,
her home will be a torch
blown out - her turquoise eyes,
curtained. Sorrow will open
like a jar of dragonflies, fireflies
released as one.
And even then, when resigned
to the careful truth, the separation
will ache like a phantom limb,
like a stillborn child held, kissed,
never receiving.

As the end approaches,
I will have to force the basics
of breathe, sleep, eat
for her sake and those around me
who love her equally as I do.
I will forget about hope
and then later I will remember
her eyes, alit with playful joy,
her summers spent on proud
adventures and the way she loved me,
never giving up, generous
as an empathetic and beautiful queen,
loving me
without understanding me
but trusting me
all the same.

Repeating, the days
knowing a different day will only be worse,
veiling the eyelids, opening an emptiness
that will never be eased.
Repeating but not forever, but
longer than anticipated. In spite
of the great love you feel, you feel
used-up, under appreciated.
But this is her now, diseased and drugged,
does not diminish her glowing
life-long compassion, her extravagant tolerance
and kindness, connection to everyone, her softness
that still peels away the crust in an instant
when her heart is touched, when faith
is required.

Duty has made work in the garden
impossible, waking up,
a barren chore.
The mountains have dropped,
flattened out into a steady plane.
Energy I gave up as mine, came back,
surprising me with my own resilience,
stamina to hold the days together one after another
until they became months, a way of life and service.
This gift like a curse like a gift
necessary to pluck
my soul from a rut it had no awareness it was even in
until out, until forced to hold a different tune
and play it until it becomes naturally possible,
a place of unbelievable challenge met,
a place to live without
decisions, conclusions,
live as an open-end-nerve swimming
stroke by stroke upstream -
most times lit on fire,
a few times resting on the bank,
looking around
tamed, soothed.



I cry out throughout the night.
I cry for the thousands due to die
who still remain unclaimed.
A slow step through misery, with moments
intermittent of a pure turquoise glow.
A gradual waking into loss and the definite
abyss of absolute letting-go.
Mid-sleep panic that wakes
me with its red tentacle squeeze
crushing my mind,
and the steady breath I need to endure
another tomorrow.
I cry out but I keep it contained -
my flesh without hope
my spirit committed to this sacred duty
as the rest of me is battered, broken-branched
bearing, feebly carrying
one collapsed body, now another.

A kiss
A curl
a look out
a look beyond
a rosy anticipation.
All things compare to each other
in the dark gloom of dissatisfaction,
meaningless activity
reaching its zenith then back to the nadir and
spinning again.
Painting helps and even singing a familiar song
but these things do not break the loop
or contain more than a flawed and temporary ease.
Hands down, Hands open and the mind saying
now- be brave!

Love is deeper than darkness
more unexpected and varied than the checkpoints
of delusion, chaos and dementia.
Love then, widespread.
Take on that love
and place what weighs you down
into the wet cement blocks
of this unhappy nightmarish decline.

Do this and inherit
the dreamy peace
and its mortal claim.
Do this and be devoted
to good service, knowing
all else is bloodshed,
must be shed to earn your keep
and beeline your way to
a maturing discipline,
an invincible pronouncement -

angelic terror
where only
this slender slice of light exits
to squish through,
beckoning, supreme.

I do not know
the treatment
the reasons
for such a grand tribulation
I have only achieved this interval
of a tiny budding joy,
a respite from the imploding friction.
I do not know if it is more than
a respite, if it is a crossing over,
a victory over infection and chronic chaotic influences

but today she walks a little stronger, limping still
but improving her gait.
Today the Earth is this simple location,
open to the angels and to recovery.
I did not expect this calamity, collapse of
every dream, but my eyes are lifting.
I don't need a massive harvest, just food
enough to sustain and faith enough
for a mild liberation.

Melody screeched to a halt,
bubble big, too big, extinguished.
I relinquished my faith for answers.
Gruesomely unattractive
in full sight
in sharp black and white
immutable, I wanted
control like some want pleasure,
like one without restrictions
or moral aptitude.

Demons aggressively demanded my trust
underserved, making up stories
to turn failures into victories.
Hell is the steel-illusion-force of truth inverted
where there is no bowing down to the greater
authority, who is God, in charge,
unpredictable, not a pawn to use to
increase power, not a valium pill
to ease my anxiety while
traversing the treacherous unknown.

In that journey there is only one activity,
only faith resuscitating,
the outcome irrelevant -
a blue streak across a grey sky,
feasting on surrender.

Sandbox throughout the vastness
take away the end of time
and I will slide like a globe,
like a planet, bursting stars
as I go, grounding suns and
drowning blackholes in my wake.

I will peel back tomorrow,
compost it into a Sunday secret
gasping for a solitude it will never find
or play-in again.

Take the hunger from Infinity and
I will be open as an abyss, spending money
like everyday is my birthday, my death day.
I will give birth away from
the tempting waters of deception
that conceal choice in hesitation
that drive the mystic to forsaken symbolism,
that pull the spine from its vertebrae, rotating
in one split-second choice,
while looking at it, desiring it, looking like
something worth the price of a soul.

Boredom demands at least a breeze,
at least a far-off flutter to speak the hope
that angels are real.
Take us out of this passageway,
underground mazes, mole homes
that imply safety. The sun is a sea lion.
We will ride beside him and he will coach
us to swerve and flip,
avoid the jellyfish and the stingray.
Meaning will pour like rain on the top
of our surfaced heads –

a storm, this sickness, just another high wave,
just another necessity to dive deeper,
lungs and cells heavy, heavier
to avoid the overhead storm.

Inside, full of hot nerves
sinking without the sight of tentacles
or a slice of coral
to latch onto.
Your faculties, twisted,
breaking logic into shards.
Freedom came like a larger stone to carry,
duty like a sunburn, burning, causing
the first and second layer of skin to blister.
Useless music passes, cannot be kept
or remembered. The space is traveled
knocking against corners, bruising bones
and the remains of visions.
Stings on the pads of your feet
in the white of your eyes.

Inside, we are a tall-tower rubble,
a stack of concrete broken blocks
and bodies
and grief that lasts generations.

Inside, there is a ship enticing
we cannot board,
a mutual weariness,
a ghostly outage blackout,
blinding us from seeing
sharp corners, soft cushions,
the way to retrieve
a glass
in the kitchen, on the counter
of already poured, useful water.

Blended
into this scenery, this sick bed
and the watered-downed horizon.
It is weak with over-empathizing
tearing crusts off until all protection
is gone from my soft mushy core.
I cannot acclimatize to this grief,
her life-force-fading drawn into my own
bruised blood of doom, dooming my
own cells and strength into this unfair despair,
unsoothable scorch and decay.

A washing down after every visit, care-day
so I do not mimic the symptoms
of death and dying and the aching
anguish of helplessness.

This path will not lead
to a garden but to a cliff,
a farewell without ever coming back.
Each step toward the edge is torture
when taken, is forced not taken because
there is no standing still against it,
no turning around, the inevitable is absolute.
This path is darkness, and this darkness
is complete love - heavy, high above,
a terrifying incarnation.

Turn to me, I turn
skinned,
striking a blow
to the inner circle.
My soul is a peanut,
two parts, shelled, asymmetrical.
Unity is divine, to kill
is never excusable or brave or
holy.
The bloodwind is the wind
that turns to defeat every journey
in disaster.
Take a mouthful - swirl the grey slime
of decline and the sharp spikes
of uncertainty, to swallow and know this
is what is meant to be
and what you have is this moment
to love and this moment again
to love
and the rest is not worth one thought,
is too much to take in,
so take in and yield to its power.

Chips of clear and broken glass.
Will I make this destiny-duty
intact or burn out on a hospital bed,
drained to the point of no return?
The stones are joy. I keep my smile
pressed on, my impatience under breath
and my dignity on a wire - pulled and tugged
by her unnecessary necessities.

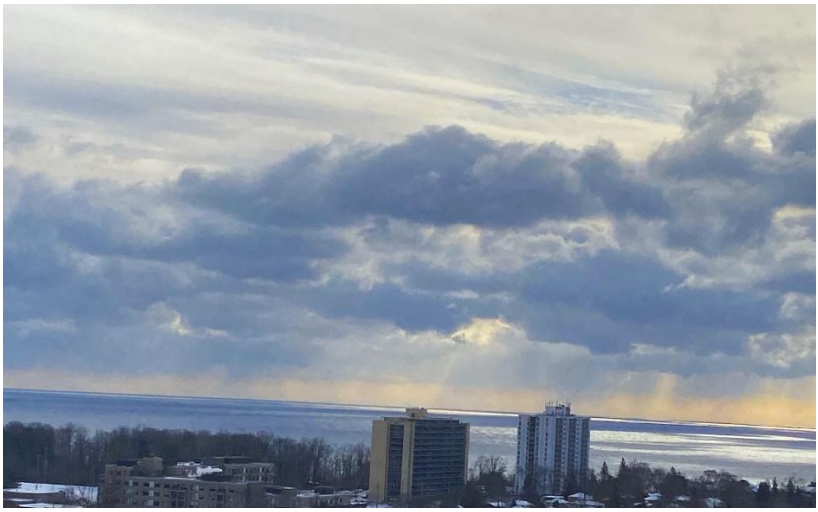
When I am tired
the guilt pores in like
castor oil, down the wrong pipe
into the windpipe as I struggle
to regain our once synchronized flow,
but it will not return or rewind, as her love
only shows in momentary flickers now
before she dives again into these catacombs
collapsing.

She is owned by the morphine
pumping into her bloodstream
at regular intervals, pumping its purpose
to nullify her pain, while twisting mental foreign
tracks through her brain that torture her
with their relentless sticky grid
and serpents' faces rising, telling her
she is owned, robbed of her
treasured independence, confined to home,
watching her once happy socializing light darken,
and you love her, you know her. You know

for a while
the monster will chomp at the moon,
will take the glow from her view,
soil every brilliant horizon,

will capture her honoured seat,
even conquer her spiritual home,
for a while
death's rotting belly
will do what it must do,
bloat and swell
foul, naturally cruel.

Dream-self
destiny-self
never align
As soon as the shackles have cracked,
a new cage has formed,
taking away the morning light,
a chance to see the phenomena
of untainted being.
I have fallen into usefulness
like a bottomless sewer pit, falling, nothing
broke, just the drain of gravity in my bones
as I fall, lacking
the gift of appreciation and the possibility
of a safe landing.



Selling parts secretly owned
but never named. Scraping off
the daily dread to find a hope.
Hoping her suffering soul
will be reconciled in a flash,
unscathed when the new one begins,
budding, blooming into the opening,
the center of the ring,
enveloped in tenderness eternal.

Then the peace she gained by her natural
good heart will expand and blot out her
anxieties, her struggles for control.

She will be unharmed, in a state
where joy overwhelms with a constant
ecstasy sustainable and God is beside her
within her and all around her, swirling, caressing,
like God has always been, only now with a certainty
that even the most faithful servants
(inside time
inside gravity)
have never known.

Purely dying
like the universe
bottoming out,
letting it all go into
a sinkhole oblivion.
Purely fear of losing
the definite, the breathing lungs
in the body on the bed
and the heart-seized and blind from
its atomic power.
Purely God
holding the stick and strings,
concealed and blanketing,
preparing her soul for this
divine beginning.

The hall light is dim.
The curtains rustle forward.
Her eyes, once wet with anxiety's tears,
now see the angels surround, the truth
of boundless love, for her, for all.

Last days
Dark days
dangerous death
at my doorstep,
swinging its hips to-and-fro.
Burning body, cracked, gnawed
away by insect bites, rodent bites
and the big blackhole open-mouth, forsaken.
Take what you must, but take it now,
swiftly, cover the core and the extremities
with your weight and then lift that weight
into the light of the sun, glorious
as a sparkle-water-wave-ripple
and a solitary hawk merging with the horizon.

Let her go like that hawk, pure in spirit
as she is, kind and soft as a child as she is.
Let her go into a dream that turns from
a dream into heaven's threshold,
where she crosses over filled with your glory,
and my father looking on
with steady, welcoming eyes.

Outer nerves,
the madness of rise and decline,
undulating like an erratic wave,
the body joined to the illusion,
to past conclusions
and repetitive patterns remolded but unchanged.
Anxiety and intuition smudged
into one dim light.
I bow to the blowing wind, to the ignorance of now.
I hold her hand more now than I did as a child.
Tears rest for a while but lack any regulation.
Slow as a sloth but unpredictable as a storm.
Each day expends
what once was a normal week of energy.
Downward is the secret.
Bend in the direction of whatever gives.
The night is full of apocalyptic dreams,
solar flares and precautions, preparations
to minimize the coming death-blast charring burn.

The night season comes
and Earth is mine to hold,
witness its mark
and its gathering decay
while you sleep in an unconscious
darkening - skin around your mouth
turning blue, and inside that open circle,
inner lips peeling rice-paper fine
and your tongue like a dried log, that I keep sponging,
trying to saturate and regain its malleable form.

Your eyebrows twitch in what the nurses
promise me is not pain, promised me
you are comfortable
even though
for three days and three nights you
have lingered in a grizzly dehydrated shadow-stasis.

These days are like years, ripping away my trust,
my faith, my understanding of mercy,
solidifying the power
of bone-chiselling dread.

I love you, more in your helplessness,
in your patience for the final command, lingering,
red sores forming under your eyes,
fingers cold, purple pale and never grasping.

I stay with you in that place, even when
I sleep, I never sleep without you with me.
I love you and I hurt for you
and I want your release from this
brutal collapse of your form.

Why or even how you are lingering so long,
even the doctor can't say.
I think you are buffering us from the pain of your loss
I think sometimes maybe mercy burns
hotter than punishment.

And these times
life surpasses understanding,
when the bottom current over quicksand thins,
breaking the chrysalis, clearing the way
for an unwanted redemption.

I am lifted
Blood on a field Blood in a cloud
and then so many
streams flowing, unassuming.
I take your hand, lean
over you and kiss your forehead,
weeping, praying, saying
again and again I love you, thank you.
Your breaths are short, coming from below
not from your chest, but from your deepest gut,
stillness, ease, a letting go.
I drop like a bird on your shoulder.
I know you are leaving. You know
it is a beautiful alchemy, accumulation
of a life so gloriously lived. I tell you
to take Jesus' hand and he will take you
to the golden tender light of eternal heaven.
You take his hand, and God
has become the atmosphere,
encapsulating, removing time.
Your last breath is more
a soft sigh than a breath,
not a cross-wind of struggle,
not a brush-stroke of "But wait.."
You are gone.
Seagulls fill the view from the window,
circling, joyful in their angelic form.
You are free.
My heart has merged with yours,
forest blue, deep and rich and forever.

My mother, my powerful ally,
friend for all ages - goodbye,
the six-month journey to this point
was treacherous, the last weeks, tortuous,
but these final moments were divine,
was God's grace in full view, mercy
that healed all pain gone before,
resurrection visible like spread-out water lilies
or Elysian Fields, sublime.
My mother, the sky is again yours,
embracing the seen and unseen spectrums.
Your sky is prophecy, feeding
the bedrock and the water's reflection,
all parts proved sacred, identical
to the immutable moving whole.

(Eileen Grayhurst aka Lee Porter and Marilyn Monroe) 1952

(Elieen (Lee) Grayhurst 2005)

Publication Acknowledgments

***All of these poems have been published and have appeared in*:**
Kavya Kishor; Literary Revelations; As Surely As The Sun Literary Magazine; Literary Cocktail Magazine; Vatsalaradwritingworld Magazine; Hobo Camp Review; Raven Cage Zine; Synchronized Chaos; Our Poetry Archive; Ephemeral Elegies; Winamop; Cultural Reverence; Fevers of the Mind; Sahityapost; Medusa's Kitchen; Otherwise Engaged Literature and Arts Journal; Jnuri Magazine (poem translated into Korean); Setu

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About the Author

Allison Grayhurst **is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Four of her poems were nominated for "Best of the Net" in 2015/2018, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for "Best of the Net" in 2017. She has over 1,400 poems published in more than 530 international journals and anthologies.**

Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published twenty other books of poetry and five collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of Somewhere Falling she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook The *River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications.

Her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications.

As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Her book *Tadpoles Find the Sun* was published by Cyberwit, 2020.

More recently, her book *Running, lightwave riding* was published by Cyberwit 2023.

In 2023, her work was translated in Korean and published in "Jnuri Magazine".

In 2020, her work was translated into Chinese and published in "Rendition of International Poetry Quarterly" and in "Poetry Hall".

In 2018, her book *Sight at Zero*, was listed #34 on CBC's "Your Ultimate Canadian Poetry List".

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.

Some of the places her work has appeared in include Parabola (Alone & Together print issue summer 2012); SUFI Journal (Featured Poet in Issue #95, Sacred Space); Elephant Journal; Literary Orphans; Blue Fifth Review; The American Aesthetic; The Brooklyn Voice; Five2One; Agave Magazine; JuxtaProse Literary Magazine, Drunk Monkeys; Now Then Manchester; South Florida Arts Journal; Gris-Gris; The Muse – An International Journal of Poetry, Storm Cellar, morphrog (sister publication of Frogmore Papers); New Binary Press Anthology; Straylight Literary Magazine (print); Chicago Record Magazine, The Milo Review; Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; The Antigonish Review; Dalhousie Review; The New Quarterly; Wascana Review; Poetry Nottingham International; The Cape Rock; Ayris; Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry (now called The Journal); The Toronto Quarterly; Fogged Clarity, Existere; Boston Poetry Magazine; Decanto; White Wall Review.

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Quotes

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, legendary singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of ‘Wigford Rememberies’ and ‘The Abandoned’, Nightwood Editions; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity’s authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst

is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water," *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros.

"Grayhurst's rapturous outpouring of imagery makes her poems easily enjoyable … Like a sear the poet seeks to fathom sensual and spiritual experience through the images of a dream," *Canadian Literature*.

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is … the poetry of Allison Grayhurst," *Blaise Wigglesworth*, Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice.

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our

earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

"Biting into the clouds and bones of desire and devotion, love and grief, Allison Grayhurst basks the reader, with breathtaking eloquence, in an elixir of words. Like lace, the elegance is revealed by what isn't said. This is stunning poetry," *Angela Hryniuk*, author of 'no visual scars'.

"Allison Grayhurst is a poet whose work is characterized by startling imagery and uncompromising emotion, whose pieces have appeared in prestigious magazines. Lights, darks, colors, and passions intertwine throughout the pages of her work," *Louise E. Allin,* Literature and Language.

"When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold," *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“The breath of roles covered in Allison Grayhurst’s poetry is exceptional. Even poems covering similar perspectives express subtle distinctions, distinctions which add depth to the poet’s larger themes. The cohesive psychology of the poet is clear, allowing for long reads and re-reads.” says author *Patrick Linsenmeyer.*

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of Synchronized Chaos.

Books by Allison Grayhurst

Paperbacks with Edge Unlimited Publishing:

Book 1: Journey of the Awakening, 1997, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CH6WO5Y; ISBN-10: 1478189339; ISBN-13: 978-1478189336
Book 2: The Longing to Be, 1998, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CH94ZNK; ISBN-10: 1478197684; ISBN-13: 978-1478197683
Book 3: Death and Other Possibilities, 2000, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CHB8M0K; ISBN-10: 1478208163; ISBN-13: 978-1478208167
Book 4: Outliving the Inevitable, 2002, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CHBYD1W; ISBN-10: 1478220295; ISBN-13: 978-1478220299
Book 5: Into My Mortal, 2004, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CHFGOB0; ISBN-10: 147822858X; ISBN-13: 978-1478228585
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Book 8: Pushing Through The Jelly Fire, 2010, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CHXZYOA; ISBN-10: 1478256567; ISBN-13: 978-1478256564
Book 9: The River is Blind, 2012, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CICVQ6K; ISBN-10: 1478280131; ISBN-13: 978-1478280132

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Book 11: If I Get There – Poems of Faith and Doubt, a collection, 2012, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00CIZQGI0; ISBN-10: 1479348740; ISBN-13: 978-1479348749
Book 12: Wallpaper Stars, 2013, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00DQBDZAW; ISBN-10: 1490499172; ISBN-13: 978-1490499178
Book 13: For Every Rain - a collection of early poems, 2013, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00E6Y47OQ; ISBN-10: 1491065656; ISBN-13: 978-1491065655
Book 14: Jumana and Perfect Love - two poetic prose pieces, 2013, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00E74B45A; ISBN-10: 1491081465; ISBN-13: 978-1491081464
Book 15: Walkways, 2014, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00OR1VVH4; ISBN-10: 1502792133; ISBN-13: 978-1502792136
Book 16: As My Blindness Burns - three long poems, 2014, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00OS7HFZY; ISBN-10: 1502838265; ISBN-13: 978-1502838261
Book 17: Our Children Are Orchards – collected poems about animals, children and pregnancy, 2015, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B00TZDDP5K; ISBN-10: 1508582920 ISBN-13: 978-1508582922
Book 18: Fire and more, 2016, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B01BO7P7DM; ISBN-13: 978-1517327279; ISBN-10: 151732727X
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Book 21: Sight at Zero – selected poems (1988 to 2017), 2017, Edge Unlimited Publishing: ASIN: B075Q7TDJK; ISBN-13: 978-1975894016; ISBN-10: 1975894014
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Book 28: The Sculptures of Allison Grayhurst, 2018, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B078TJTY37; ISBN-13: 978-1983534270; ISBN-10: 1983534277
Book 29: Animal Culture (rules of commitment), 2018, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ASIN: B07H1WRD5K; ISBN-13: 978-1719094962; ISBN-10: 1719094969
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Book 31: Snapshots (excerpts of poems on images), 2019, Edge Unlimited Publishing: ASIN: B07PQZV4P4; ISBN-13: 978-1090605115; ISBN-10: 1090605110
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Book 33: The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst – completed works for 2018 to 2021 (Volume 7), 2021, Edge Unlimited Publishing: ISBN: 9798740225913; ASIN: B0932GSD5C; ASIN: B093FW56NQ; ISBN: 9798773718482
Book 34: A Wish Alone, 2022, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ISBN: 9798803463450; ASIN: B0B7GNMLW4; ISBN: 9798842289424; ASIN: B0B6XNQMFS
Book 35: Comments on The poetry of Allison Grayhurst (from 2011 to 2023), 2023, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ISBN: 9798375947556; ASIN: B0BV49Y5B9
Book 36: The Light Given, 2023, Edge Unlimited Publishing; ISBN: 9798378690404

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Tadpoles Find the Sun, 2020, Cyberwit; ISBN-10: 9390202558; ISBN-13: 978-9390202553
Trial and Witness, selected poems, 2016, Creative Talents Unleashed or CTU Publishing; ISBN-13: 978-0692702529; ISBN-10: 0692702520; ASIN: B01II9O63G
Make the Wind, 2016, Scars Publications; ISBN-10: 1530924995; ISBN-13: 978-1530924998
No Raft- No Ocean, 2015, Scars Publications; ISBN-10: 1518842046; ISBN-13: 978-1518842047
Common Dream, 1991, Edge Unlimited; ISBN-10: 0969542313 ISBN-13: 978-0969542315
Somewhere Falling, 1995, Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book; ISBN-10: 0888783655; ISBN-13: 978-0888783653

Chapbooks:

Surrogate Dharma, 2014, Barometric Pressures Author Series, Kind of a Hurricane Press
The River is Blind, 2012, above/ground press; ISBN-10: 1-897224-99-0; ISBN-13: 978-1-897224-99-1

Four chapbooks published under the pseudonym of Jocelyn Kain:
Jumana, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-36-9
Perfect Love, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-66-0
Before the Dawn, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-11-3
Joshua's Shoulder, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 1-55072-025-2

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original." Beach Holme Publishers.

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Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Five times nominated for "Best of the Net," she has over 1375 poems published in over 525 international journals. She has 25 published books of poetry and 6 chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.